

SATURDAY 26TH DEC. 1953

KURE.

Hello my darling,

I very happy new year to you x.
Just now I felt as though I could write a book
and thought, well, why not? So I took a book
and started to write, and this is it.

Well to go back to my last short note to you,
we came alongside as anticipated at 0900 and spent
the remainder of the morning having a good
clean up around the place in preparation for the
next two days. Leave was granted from 1300 &
all who could were ashore in a rush, all that
is, except the duty watch and a few cautious
people like Shelly and myself. I washed &
ironed a few things then slept for about two
hours and was I thankful for it later on!

At 5P we went ashore into Kure and I got
the crochery samples as promised. There is an
egg shell cup, a Satsuma saucer, chipped a little,
and a Noritake saucer. As they were "presents"
I made a "presento" of 40 cigarettes & the shop keeper

and I parted company the best of friends. I have packed the three pieces in a box & will post them and the table cloth I mentioned before F.A.O. I say F.A.O. because the poor old postie has been run to a standstill these last few weeks & I don't want to unnecessarily burden him.

Inside the lid of the box you will find a small sheet of white paper giving all the pertinent info, price ranges, design, quantities, so be careful when you unpack it not to lose it amongst the packing. I think you will find the pieces of crochery is better than that of the material samples I sent you. Incidentally Betty Williams does know our secret so you can sign whichever way you please.

Also inside the box is a little box with an example of damascene work. As you will see, the design is beautifully worked but the "gold" holder is shoddy and spoils an otherwise lovely trinket.

Compacts & cigarette cases of this work are lovely for they are black with the gold & silver wire inlay only and have none of the imitation stuff around them as the brooch I am sending

to you has. In the middle of this letter you will find a slip of pink paper explaining exactly how damascene work is done. Quite an elaborate process isn't it?

After I had taken the crochery I thought I had better buy something there as he appeared to have gone to some trouble to get the three different pieces so I bought something for you. I intended to keep it as a surprise for you but I can't keep secrets. It is a musical jewellery box. You know the sort of thing, open the lid & it plays a tune. It has a mirror inside the lid, plush lining, a tray that is hinged & comes up as the lid opens and has three little compartments in it, and a special little compartment in the bottom for rings. It is dark red, almost brown with oriental design and finished in lacquer. Quite charming I thought. I don't like sending it to you in the post as it might be damaged so I'll keep it & bring it home.

Next we had a meal at Kure House and then to the Fleet Canteen for a few quiet drinks. Here we met some British Army types who wanted 12

volunteers to come to their mess at Hris, about 5 miles away & help them get rid of a beer surplus as they put it. He didn't like to refuse as they were quite pleasant about it so we piled in a line of jeeps and twenty minutes later arrived at their mess.

In the centre of the room against one wall was a large fireplace with a fire burning, there were Chinese lanterns, coloured lights, all the Xmas trimmings and it seemed like a real English Christmas. Unfortunately it didn't snow.

To let things loosen up gradually a darts competition was started & for some unknown reason I was throwing well that night & came close to winning.

Next they put on their star turn, a piper in full kilts & two dancers, kilts also, did a couple of acts dancing around the crossed claymores. The three of them were mess members but in their regalia they looked like professional entertainers.

Just as they finished along came the carol singers outside so we all trooped out & joined in.

After they left the singing mood persisted & we gathered around the piano & sang. But not carols

I still think the Navy knows naughtier songs than the Army. And more.

Next came a comedy turn & I happened to be the scapegoat. It happened like this.

I had just got myself a beer when three army birds came up arguing & one suddenly swung on me & said "What do you think?"

"Think what?" I countered

"Well we have a W.O.2 in the mess here who says he can guess the weight of any man to within one pound."

"That so?"

"Yes & I think he can't do it. What do you think?"

"Well I think it probably could be done but it's doubtful if he could guess mine as I am deceptive when dressed". (I walked right into the trap there & then)

"O.K. we'll ask him to try. I've seen him do it time & again & I'll bet £1000 he can do it" said another

brother type said "Not!" & in two mins the mess was in an uproar and big bets were being laid.

A table was cleared & money & betting slips were placed and I was beginning to realize that they

meant it.

So along came the W.O. & we had a few words & he agreed that it was going to be difficult. However would I write my weight on a piece of paper & put it on the table so no one could see it? I would & did. And would I sit on this stool right in the middle of the floor? I did.

He walked around me signing me up felt my ankles & legs, arms and chest & then said "Now put your arms around my neck" & when I had done so he lifted me, hefted me a few times & put me back on the stool again. Then he considered me a little while longer & said "Right, I've got you just about taped." & "Now when I lift you this time I want you to give a heave, sort of lift yourself as well. If you do that then that is half a pound my way & I'll win. If you don't, then that is half a pound against me & I'll lose."

So I put my arms around his neck again and the room was as quiet as a church. All of a sudden he said "Now", lifted me, I heaved & he sat me back on the stool again & the room rocked with

laughter. For a second I was puzzled until I realized that I had a very very wet sit upon. When he said "Now" & lifted, someone from behind slipped a beer tray full of icy water onto the stool. I think I laughed as much as the rest of them then, but spent a lot of the remainder of the night standing stern first to the fire. Talk about a wet area & no fish.

Supper came on & it was beautiful cold roast pork & chicken, ham and dozens of different varieties of savories. I ate enough for two I'm sure for next morning & wasn't the least interested in breakfast.

Came midnight & the piper picked up his pipes & we formed a long line behind him and marched around the mess then out into the sleeping quarters. On the way I acquired an empty beer bottle & a fire bucket so as drummer I was elected to second position behind the piper. Cabin after cabin we entered, switched on the lights, pulled the occupants if any, out of bed & stripped the bed & proceeded to the next cabin.

Back in the mess again & the C.O. a Lt Colonel announced he was leaving, made a short speech &

stood back while the president responded. He said the usual nice things & finished up with "And so, sir, on behalf of the mess & our navy guests I would like to say this, 'how about another hour's extension of time for the bar'". The old bloke just laughed & said "Go ahead, you'd have it anyway".

The party broke up, we piled into a 10 ton truck & the driver took us right on to the wharf. He wished he had his jeep as he could have taken us right on board & done the thing properly. He was quite perved because no one had told him the gangway was too small for a 10 tonner.

One of our hosts insisted on accompanying us & brought with him a huge box of left overs from supper which he was going to give to the duty watch. He made the top of the gangway & collapsed over a piece of rope, but he went down gallantly like a true soldier & didn't spill a piece of the supper. The officer of the watch thanked him & escorted him back to the truck and that was the last we saw of him.

All in all, a very successful Xmas eve. But the next one will be better as I will be with you my

darling. Only another 364 days.

Xmas day saw the ship in a state of chaos after 10 AM.

At 9 AM. we had a church service in the hangars after which Santa gave us our parcels. These parcels came with the compliments of the "Sun" Melbourne & contained 2 ounces of tobacco, papers, tooth brush & paste, razor blades, writing pad & envelopes, bitterscotch & a plum pudding. Nice thought wasn't it? Then there was a beer issue & the captain & all officers toured the ship wishing all the compliments of the season. In one mess the boys told the commander that he had dirtied the deck with his boots & would he scrub out or take punishment. He preferred the former, took off his coat hat collar & tie, shoes socks, rolled his pants up while he got his bucket & hot water & brush & he set to & scrubbed the mess. However he said that as he had 3 rings on his arm could he detail off some one to help him. They acquiesced & he made the navigator scrub the tables with ~~at~~ a toothbrush. Commander (2) had to scrub out the galley. While he was doing that the chief cook said he wasn't eating any Xmas dinner as he knew what was in it.

After lunch I was all prepared to have another little snooze when Alwyn Shelly Ken Chloee & Lon asked me to come ashore. I told them no & they told me yes so I went ashore to the Fleet Canteen. But it didn't do them any good for I had about an hour's sleep in a big arm-chair.

I was glad I did for I met two chaps who I had not seen in six years & we talked like a pack of hens, reminiscing (!)

We went to Kure House for tea and the meal squashed all enthusiasm for a good night. By 9 P. I was in bed and fast asleep. I sleep until one of the lads came in strumming a guitar he had bought. He came close to waking me.

Well that brings us up to today. Boxing day.

It is now 1300 & I will spend the next 4 hours writing to you and doing a bit of ironing. A woman's work is never done.

This evening I am going off again to buy you a doll & some badges for a new uniform which I shall buy soon.

The doll I am buying for you is Japanese & is

a dressing table type. I think they are cute.

Do you know what I think my darling? I think you are leading too hectic a life at the moment. Why? Because I have had 3 letters from you with 17 written on the back. I'm afraid you'll just simply have to do better sweet.

At Inchon as I have mentioned previously I received letters 18 & 21. Here I received letters 22 23 24 & 25 but no 19 or 20. I'm wondering what could have happened to them.

On the way to Hong Kong in the next few days I'll compose a letter to the minister. It will be interesting to note if he changes his manner towards you in anyway.

~~At~~

Also at Inchon I received a note from my mother saying that she was going to Sydney for a few days & that she would drop in on you at the there. By then of course it was too late to warn you to be prepared to meet her so I just had to hope for the best.

Yes, she does gash a bit but don't be deluded,

for under that exterior she's as hard as nails and very shrewd. You can bet your bottom dollar that if she finds she doesn't like & you she'll tell you straight out.

In answer to your question the correct thing to do is to send an invitation to which she will reply that she finds it impossible to attend. She would be as embarrassed as much as Pop and as she would be virtually on her own at the wedding I'm almost certain that she won't want to attend.

I would like her to be there but our happiness is our first consideration and an atmosphere of strain or nervous tension would not help. So before you send out the invitations I will ask her straight out what her intentions are & we can have the matter settled.

Now that you have met my mother I think I should fill in a bit more of the picture for you as I want you to know how I see things, & not base your opinions entirely on what other people have told you.

The mistake in the first place was made when mum & pop married. They should never have done so as they were two quite different people. Pop was

staid, cautious and quiet; mum full of fun. Pop would rather dig in the garden & read a book by the fire while mum was keen on dancing & was quite a sports-woman. For quite a few years she played interstate tennis and on one occasion came close to being Australian champion.

At the time when I was born the depression hit & Pop lost his job. The home had to be sold & for some time we, as millions of others did, quietly starved, but while that helped to bind some families it caused rifts in others such as ours.

Then Pop took a job flying & for most of the time he was away and mum was left on her own to raise two squalling brats. This was when we lived in Queensland where neither Pop or mum had any relations. If you can imagine me taking you to Adelaide say, and then leaving you for 3 weeks every 4, you will know how mum felt. It wasn't Pop's fault, because he had to have some sort of job, money doesn't grow on trees.

It was during this time that they started to grow apart I think. Pop saw it & he threw up flying

to come to Melbourne with a position in DCA. but by then it was too late.

They had been married fifteen years then and in that time had lived in as many houses in Melbourne Sydney & Brisbane. That is no foundation for a successful marriage.

A little while after this the war broke out, our house was sold from under us & we moved again. Then my grandmother took ill and we moved to the ancestral home so mum could look after her and it was from here that Pop joined the airforce & was away again.

All this time Pop's job took him all over Australia & mum turned to her tennis again until it became part of her, more so in fact than her family & so I couldn't see it at the time I can see now that she had to have some adult company & relaxation or go nuts. As she had moved around a lot she had made no lasting acquaintances & consequently when we returned to Melbourne she had to make new friends. So that by the time Pop joined the RAAF they were just two people living under the same roof by force of habit.

Just as you can't imagine your mother loving someone other than your father so I felt when mum told me she was going to seek a divorce from Pop, when she didn't want him but another man she had known thru mutual friends, for some time. It's taken me about 10 years to get used to the fact.

However once she had the divorce she found she liked her independence & has stayed that way since, despite the fact that the other man still wants to marry her, even now after about 12 years.

Both mum & Pop have found the right mate now but for mum it is too late.

If you have struggled this far then I'll continue with part two of the story. It really is part two for things were vastly different from then on.

My grandmother died & grandfather felt he wanted to get away from all associations with the past so he left the home never to return. As far as I know he ostracised mum, as did the rest of the family & went to live with one of his old cobbers at a beach suburb & is still there.

However, that left mum with the house, me

the other man. His name isn't of importance to you my dear so will just call him D. He was a builder by trade before the war put him partially out of action & he saw possibilities in the old home. It was a large weatherboard house with a slate roof on a big piece of ground in Caulfield quite near the station. The land is 85' x 150', it is a corner block, & the house area is 23 squares. The normal house is about 12 squares a square being 100 square feet. So he got to work & urged mum to buy the house & turn it into 3 flats. Well, with a bit of aid from Dick & I, mum bought the house & they set to & turned it into 3 very comfortable self contained furnished flats.

From time to time I have put a little bit of cash into the house & most of my leaves from the Navy I have spent working there, for as you can imagine there is a lot of work to be done to keep a place like that in order, inside & out.

Well now my efforts, such as they were, look like paying dividends. The place is getting too much for mum to handle & for some time she

has been looking for a suitable buyer for the house. A couple of weeks ago she found one & as Dick & I are part owners she flew to Sydney to get his consent to sell, which he gave, & signed the relevant papers, & then she posted the contract on to me to sign. At the date it has not arrived but I should have it before we are very far into January.

Some time ago she wrote intimating her intentions & while we did not mention any figures she has asked me to accept all that I have put into the house in the way of hard cash together with interest, and I agreed to this.

So providing the deal goes thru, and there is no earthly reason why it shouldn't, you and I darling will be about £400 nearer our own home. I hope.

I have explained all this in detail for two reasons. One is that I don't want you to be frightened or wary of mum's attitude towards you, and if you can understand in some measure why she is like she is today, shrewd and hard, you will feel more at ease when next you meet. It is only the unknown element of any quantity that has no

scared & if it is no longer unknown, then it is
licked.

The other reason^{is} that I want you to realize why its
so all important to me to have a home, one home,
with someone I love & know for the rest of my life.

Its hard for you to understand, because you have such a
wonderful family, that there are times when I feel that
mum & even Pop are little more than casual acquaintances
and that from the time I was 15 till a year or so ago
I just didn't want to go home to either. I just was-
n't interested. When I first went to Houma just over
three years ago, weeks used to go by before I'd force
myself to come to Sydney.

Since then I have broadened my outlook & tried to
be less of a stranger. What son do you know of
who has never driven his father's car or borrowed
money from his father? Actually Pop tried to
teach me to drive once in the lane & I borrowed
some money (the last weekend before we were married)
once, but that is all.

I'm not in a depressed frame of mind writing
this, and I'm not the neglected, ragged, loveless,

wretch looking for sympathy. If you know all these
little things about me you will be able to under-
stand me a little better & perhaps make a few
allowances for me if at odd occasions I go a bit
queer.

It is now 3.30P dearest & I must do some ironing or
I won't get ashore. I'll finish this book on the way
to Hong Kong. Bye for now sweet xx.

SUNDAY 27th In the Inland Sea.

Well my darling we are at sea again but not for
long this time as we reach Hong Kong next Thursday.
After that I don't know yet what is happening & actually
don't care much at the moment. These last 3 days
have been quite hectic & I feel quite exhausted,
or as the ancient Greek philosophers used to say,
buggered.

Last night Shelly Elise & I slipped off at 1700 &
walked around the shops again for an hour & a half
so I said I had intended to buy you a doll but
couldn't beat the price down enough to satisfy my-
self so it will wait for a while. I did buy my
gold badges for 23/9 which is quite reasonable for

in Australia they would cost about £3/.

As usual I saw more things that I would like & bought some. One or rather two are lacquer bowls in a dark red with a couple of little fans painted on the lids. I tried to burn them with a lighted cigarette but could not, so they are good pieces. The pair cost £5.40 or 14/6. Another thing I got was a trunk box for Butch. It is just a simple one, 4 movements to open it, & if it gets broken in the attempt then it doesn't matter. I'm thinking of getting him a microscope as I have been forbidden to buy toys.

I also saw something which I will get next time here and that is, don't laugh, a table. The one I have in mind is circular, about 3-4 feet diameter with detachable legs about 12" long. It is made of cherry wood & looks quite charming. Something else I saw were lacquer trays, quite cheap & rather attractive.

After our shopping we retired to Kure House for a meal & then to the Met Club to watch the floor show. Apart from one excellent juggling act it was mainly legs and singing. The crowd was disappointed

because there was no strip tease.

The club is right on the water's edge and as we were leaving one of the motor boats from the ship was about to depart for the ship also, so we stumbled a lift back. Infinitely more comfortable than riding in these queer three wheeled taxis on their rotten ~~roads~~ road.

We slipped & proceeded to sea again this morning at 0800 and shortly after mail was distributed & I received number 26 from you my darling & an ordinary letter & a registered letter from mum & a couple more Xmas cards making a total of 18. Charming.

I'll answer your letter first because it's the best & then tell you about the others.

I'm glad you like the pygamas, I was a bit worried in case they weren't quite acceptable. I guess there is no need to warn you about washing the scarf. Usually in those sort of things the dye runs quite a lot.

I think Lealey ought to go out with someone else for a little while. Boris sounds to me like a mother's pet used to having everything done for him & giving little in return, and badly in need of

a swift kick in the stern-sheets. I may be quite wrong & unjustly criticizing the man but that's just how he strikes me.

So we won't be back in Japan for about another six weeks & I won't be able to get your material ^{till} then unless I can find it any cheaper in Hong Kong.

Well the letter I have from mum tells me that the house has been sold. A deposit has been made & the balance will be paid when I sign the contract of sale & forward it to the solicitors. The deal will take at least a month from now to be finalized but the house does not have to be vacated before March 20th.

In that time mum will be looking for a small house to buy, somewhere in one of the small towns in the Randamang ranges north of Melbourne.

My share, now our share of the cash from sale is dependant upon the final figure, solicitor's & agent's fees & so on but will be a little more than I figured on, and that is around £500. I don't expect the cheque for about 3 months but when it arrives I'll endorse it & send it to you to put into your bank. Darling we're going to have our home

in next to no time.

This brings me to two other things. One is my Will. Naturally I had to make provision for mum in the Will I made just after we left Australia because she was to a certain extent dependant on what I had invested in the home. The sale of property has changed that so in a registered envelope I am posting you another one from Hong Kong & which you can put away. Don't lose it for many people would pay thousands for my signature, ha!

The other thing, for which you are going to say nasty things, is that I have a lot of junk in the old home & it has got to go somewhere when mum moves. A lot of it will be useful to us & to me so I am suggesting to mum that she pack it all up & consign to Guildford COO. I would suggest you have it picked up & take it home. Anything it there will be things for your trousseau, towels, lace & such so when you get it take out what you want, pack the rest up again & store it till I return when I can sort out what I want to keep. Don't be the least surprised at anything you come across for in my years of travelling I have picked up all sorts of

queer things.

Had it not been for the fact that Pop & Nance are moving I would have asked him to look after it but he will have enough to do without worrying about my gear. Him won't want to be worried with it so I'm at a bit of a loss to know what to do. If you don't want to pick it up would you arrange for it to be picked (out of mine) up & stored please my sweet. I hate to bother you like this but I don't know what else to do about it.

In her letter mum said some very nice things about you and I know she is sincere. Also she was taken with your father & said he had a most natural and ~~very~~ engaging manner.

As I thought, she would like to come to our wedding but under the circumstances is going to decline the invitation. She wants us to write & tell her all about it & also wants a photo to keep. That won't be difficult to arrange.

The registered letter contained the relevant papers for me to sign but I won't be able to post them till we reach H.K. However there is no immediate

hurry for them.

So much for that.

In our mess we go through our cups like bulls a china shop & there is always a shortage. For my part I overcame this shortage by buying a mug in Kure last time. It is about half a pint capacity of good china with a very pretty design of blossoms & mountains etc painted on. Quite distinctive in fact. This time in Kure no less than 15 have been bought 12 to send home & 3 to use in the mess by various members & I am quite pleased. No one is going to know about my table when I buy it.

One of the chaps bought a collapsible gramophone & at the moment we are being entertained by Japanese records. The gramophone folds up to a size 6" x 9" x 2. Quite isn't it?

The supply of news for the day is about finished my dear so for now I'll say bye again x.

MONDAY 28th. Just a few lines tonight my sweet as I have spent most of the evening composing a letter to the minister & one to mum. The first took me ages & I haven't finished

the other get.

Believe it or not, I spend the whole day in shirt-sleeves. It's been quite warm & I think we must have been enjoying some of your heat.

It could be that I'm callous (?), used to life & death, or just innocent because I want to see the effects of this fire in Kowloon & my only feelings are keen interest. No compassion at all, but when I do see, perhaps my feelings will be different.

In one of your recent letters you mentioned that you had told John that we are married & asked my forgiveness. I can't say that I knew that John had been told for there was no way I could have known, but even as a non-gambler I would have bet on it & I'll bet that Bobby knows also. To me this means, not that you trust them, so much as you love them. I can trust Dick but I wouldn't tell him, for although we have a strong regard for each other, because we have trodden so many different paths, that little extra

something that is between you & John & Bobby does not exist between Dick & I. Even so, I can quite realize why you did. As for asking my forgiveness I'll reiterate what I said in one of my first letters to you. No matter what you do, or say, or think ever, ~~with~~ nothing will give me cause to censure you. I am your husband & you are my wife and together we are going to build a happy & successful future. You are not going to help me build my home & bear me my children. We are going to build our home & have our family. We are in it together giving as much & taking as much as each other, & the essence of success I think lies in us having absolute trust & confidence in each other. I feel that way about you my dear & I know that you feel the same way about me, otherwise you would not have consented to marry me. And so darling, whatever it is, you have no need to ask my forgiveness, for I'll stand by you to the utmost. If it is about something you are uncertain of, ~~that~~ then I would

like to feel you would want to tell me. The past is buried but the future concerns us equally.

There is a page & a half of writing there, & it can be condensed into a few words. I love you my dearest. Goodnight xx.

TUESDAY 29th. The atmosphere aboard today is a little strained. At about 1100 a Turk a mile or so ahead of us suddenly burst into flame & plummeted straight into the drink. The copter was at the spot in a matter of a minute or so & the destroyer escort 'Concord' steamed up just after. Sea boats were lowered & searched for about an hour but all that was recovered was the pilot's helmet & part of the seat. Three months ago in U.K. this pilot's brother, also a pilot, was killed in an air accident. I wonder what his parents did to deserve this? This afternoon we had a short service on the flight deck, & in the captain's address it transpired that his fiancée's sister was his brother's widow. It makes one wonder.

There is a radio bod aboard, Gussie Hubbard, who has a wife & a young son. His wife

decided after Stan had left that she wasn't going to sit at home & do nothing so she moved out of Melbourne into the country near Warburton & rented a house, large, on a piece of land, about 3 acres for 10/- a week. Stan was displaced because she was out in the scrub & far from home, & virtually alone. She then built a fowl run & bought 12 layers, & started to grow vegetables. In the meantime Stan was still performing "Always was a bushwacker. Why can't she stay civilized?" & apparently told her as much. She replied saying she had bought a goat. Thinking he could have a dig at her he asked why a goat & not a cow. Her reply was that goat's milk was better for the baby & anyway, with her profit from the eggs & vegetables which she sells locally she had bought a cow. Still trying to convince her that it wasn't a suitable life he said that it was unsafe because prowlers might come around. So she bought two fox terriers.

The last straw was when his young son brought home an eighteen inch brown snake - alive.

He is now quite convinced that his family are building a menagerie & simply says "it can't win". My sentiments exactly. A father is twelfth man in any family.

I have just remembered a couple more points about the crochery. The crochery is packed in boxes, not weighing more than, I think, 11 lbs & the freight for each is £100. A 56 piece set goes into 7 boxes, a 93 piece into 13 boxes. This is over & above the prices quoted on the list in the sample box but includes insurance. The firm guarantees to deliver complete, whatever is purchased & any breakages will be replaced free of charge.

There is no trouble buying this crochery so if Lesley or any of the Bird girls or any one else would like any, ask them to send me the relevant info + cash & it will be as good as done. I can't, or rather I don't want to buy anything else for people other than you or your mother or Nance, as it whittles down the quantity I can bring & send to you. Crochery however is, or appears to be duty free.

Darling, on New Year Day we will have been married 11 weeks and almost $\frac{1}{3}$ of our time apart will ^{be} behind.

Today has been warm again. I can't get over it. I didn't mention it before but when we arrived in Hong Kong last time I discovered that my watha coat had been stolen. Bad enough at any time but as we were to expect cold weather it was worse for I thus had no coat. You will remember when I wrote from London I said I wore a duffle coat off. I kept quite about it & reported it missing but I kept my eyes open for it. However it did not turn up so I let it be known around that I was going to have all chiefs & PO's messes searched, that I would recognise when I saw it because of the way the buttons were sewn on & because I had my name in the lining of the pockets. The day we arrived back in Kure Xmas Eve, there it was in the locker again, strangely enough in excellent condition still. This sort of thing goes on almost the ship at intervals & most of my clothes I have on board are near-

ly in rags. One shirt is, no two shirts are seven years old, & I'm sure some of my singlets & more to school. But to wear these sort of clothes is the only way to be certain of having something to wear at all. Socks. There must be nearly 15000 black socks in this ship & so they don't last long if they are new. How do you see why I patch them. Then there is the water. The water is condensed sea water, absolutely pure but being contained in iron tanks & running thru iron pipes it inevitably collects rust. One of my sheets has dozens of huge rust spots as have a lot of my other clothes. Darling if you saw what I sometimes wear you'd disdain me. Anyone who's to see me in these places. If someone does they don't take any notice for they are either people living in the same conditions or Chinese, Japs & what have you.

Time for bye bye my beautiful one. Night darling xx
WEDNESDAY 30th. Duty tonight so I'm liable to drop the pen & shoot off somewhere at any moment.
Funny incident in the mess at lunch time today.

Listening to the tennis when the phone rang. John Sherwood grabbed it & said 'dunce' instead of G.D. Ha. He almost blushed.

The provisional programme for the next week is out & we look like staying in Hong Kong till the 11th. During that time the ship's side will be painted and the ship stored again.

On the 27th we finished our 6 weeks as duty carrier which means that for the 42 days after 27th we will be in the vicinity of H.K. That is until towards the end of that time when we will be heading north again for the Japan area ready to take over as duty carrier again on Feb 8th. Another 42 days from then as duty carrier takes us to Mar 22nd & 42 days from that date takes us to May 3rd. If we do another patrol after that it means that we will finish it on or about the 11th June & be home early July. If we don't do this 3rd patrol it means we will be home early June. Normally a ship does 12 months on a commission such as this but a carrier is different for it depends on the reviews as to how long they ~~of~~ can keep up with

the intensive flying programmes that are carried out.
A third patrol thus means 30 weeks flying & some-
how I can't see it. I'm sorry I can't tell
you to set a definite date darling, & while I
don't want you to set one & then have me turn
up after it, I don't want to come home & fool
around for weeks waiting. So could you leave
it as long as possible & then if I am still in
the dark, make it June in the hope that I will
be home that month? I've never been married
before so I don't know how easy it is to change
dates that have been set. If it won't upset
things too much I think June would be the
date to bank on. The next line is for you.

On your side of the church you may be strong
on relations but I bet I have more sailors than
you. He in the mess told me that they are
coming so don't be surprised if we get a Japanese
sea set or something. They said they were going to
bring along "middle watch" mugs to drink out of
just to see me perform. When you have decided

on how many invitations you are going to send out let
me know how many you want me to invite & I'll
send you the names & addresses

June has beaten me my sweet. The mail
closes in 5 minutes so I'll have to close. Any-
how, it wasn't a bad effort.

Tomorrow I'll write again in answer to more of
your mail (I hope). Until then my beloved, all
my fondest love,

Your devoted husband
George xxx.